Dear _____:

The determination to gain justice that has defined feminists' struggles is a major inspiration for the formation of a new, ~~woman~~WOMEN-directed group named "Challenging~~s~~ Laws and Attitudes against Women" (C.L.A.W.). Founded in the late spring of this year (1990) in Rochester, NY, C.L.A.W. is challenging New York State Statute 245.01 that requires women but not men to wear shirts. Two exceptions to the law are for nursing mothers and for women who are "entertaining" or "performing". Violation of the law, a misdemeanor, carries a maximum penalty of $_____fine and/or 15 days in jail.

In the feminist tradition of the "personal is political", the C.L.A.W. collective sees going shirtless as a political action. The group chose to work specifically on this issue - i.e. to remove this discriminatory law from the books - because we/ourselves want to be able to choose ~~ourselves~~ whether or not to remove our shirts on a hot day at the beach, running in a race, riding a bike, working at strenuous physical tasks, etc., just as men are free to do.

We also see this issue as a compelling test case of attitudes that are harmful to women - reinforcing ideas of "feminine perfection", breasts as commodities, and control of women's bodies by patriarchal society.

The idea that feminist activists should limit their work to one "important" issue (whichever issue the <u>critic</u> thinks is "it"), is divisive and limiting. It limits the feminist movement tactically because it takes away our spontaneity, it inhibits our ability to seize ripe opportunities to act. It also limits us

by obscuring our ability to see the connections among the many ways that we are oppressed as women and thereby making it more difficult to see the roots of that oppression. This, in turn, limits our ability to bring about change.

We are planning more actions to challenge the law here in NY state. Women don't have to take off their own shirts to join us. If you support the right of a women to choose when and if to remove her shirt, let us hear from you. Write to C.L.A.W. P.O. Box 10720, Rochester, NY 14610